Outline of the Proposed Synopsis Entitled as

Soft Skills Development through English Literature: A Study

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Broad Topic : Soft Skills

Title of the Topic : Soft Skills Development through English Literature: A Critical Study

Introduction :

Skill is the ability to do something well (Oxford Advance Learner's Dictionary -8th ed.) as literature introduces a person to a rich language, helps one to develop and discover good skills in developing vocabulary, discover self, sense the problems in society by a critical view, explore texts with new perspectives, the inner culture, understand the value of poetry, gain the literary skills of classics, and develop to comprehend meaning to the beautiful artistic subject.

The discourses on literary studies have gone on a long and varied voyage down the ages from Aristotle to Arunthathi Roy. The approaches of writers and readers are ever-changing. The literary voyage has seen numerous approaches from time to time, especially from the philosophical and moral notion to tJhe social, racial, regional, and individual studies. Throughout this journey, literature never fails to picturise the reality perceived based on milieus prevailing in different parts of the world.

The evolving nature of modern, scientific and technological advancements, the subsequent convergence of world markets and the modern organisational structures, have changed the way one looks at skills, attitude and work-culture hence the need to develop soft skills can play a significant role.

In the field of psychology and related disciplines, personality studies explore new horizons in character, skills and models of behaviour. Though individual differences and unpredictable environments always challenge psychologists in their efforts to find a stable model of personality assessment, they are persistent and keep building on the accumulated knowledge on human nature. The qualities of resilience and adaptability are two amazing characteristics of the "Homo sapiens" that have made them the most successful species inhabiting earth. So, it is only logical not to expect the final word on their nature. Psychologists seem to be better aware of the role of literature in instilling skill sensitivity than their counterparts in literature

Soft Skills at a Glance:

Soft Skill is a term often associated with a person's Emotional Intelligence Quotient, the cluster of personality traits, social graces, communication, language, personal habits, friendliness, managing people, leadership etc. that characterize relationships with other people. Soft skills, also known as people skills, complement hard skills to enhance an individual's relationships, job performance and career prospects.

According to researches conducted in Harvard and Stanford Universities only15% of your career success is provided by your hard skills, whilst other 85% by so called soft skills. "Soft skills get little respect but will make or break your career" (Peggy Klaus).

Launch of 'Skill India' campaign by the Indian Prime Minister clearly establishes the pressing need of skill development. In the current competitive environment, skills play an important role in giving oneself an extra edge over others. Skills development has become the

urgent need of an hour. Soft skills are identified to be the most critical skills in the current global job market especially in a fast moving era of technology.

There are many definitions of soft skills by scholars from various disciplines but among them the one by S. R. Singh in his book *Soft Skills* offers itself as a good working definition.

> "Soft Skills is a sociological term relating to a person's EQ (Emotional Intelligence Quotient), the cluster of personality traits, social graces, communication, language, personal habits, friendliness, and optimism that characterize relationships with other people" (2). He adds that "Soft Skills are qualities, personality traits and social skills which everyone possesses in varying degrees" (6).

Singh then goes on to provide a clear cut classification:

> "Soft Skills are sometimes broken down into personal attributes, such as optimism, common sense, responsibility, essence of humour, integrity, time-management, motivation; and interpersonal abilities, such as empathy, leadership, communication, good manners, sociability, the ability to teach" (7).

The concept of soft skills occupies a pivotal position at the present and the term is ubiquitous in the academic and the corporate world. Soft Skills trainers are a breed sought after by institutions and industry houses. Literature on the idea is on the increase.

There are an exhaustive lists soft skills—some put the total at 60 while some others would prefer to keep it at 87. Further, the skills are grouped into sets like life skills, problem solving skills, social skills and self skills to mention a few. Treated as repeatedly useable entities, these skills in no way can be sure indicators of a person's effective possession of them and personality. They are all interconnected and each skill depends on other skills and personality disposition making the demonstration of a particular skill the manifestation of character. A mechanistic, micro-module based approach to imparting these skills is bound to suffer from too many limitations. Instead, we need an approach involving the sensitivity of the learner where she/he would find the emotional springs within wherefrom the demonstration of soft skills flows.

In the current scenario, every educational institution includes soft skills training as part of their curriculum and some have it as a subject for a full length course. But the realisation that soft skills cannot be taught like hard skills or technical skills is yet to dawn. They have to accrue in an individual consequent on experiential journeys with reference to fellow beings, socio-cultural contexts, art, literature and an inherent reflective, introspective engagement with life in general. The instructor or the teacher of soft skills best serves here as a facilitator providing right ambience, motivation and guidance. Such a person has to be open and rich in the intrapersonal and interpersonal realms.

Another wide misconception about soft skills is that they are meant only for professional advancement. For example, soft skills supposed to be successful in marketing border on conning skills and anyone who cared to listen to personnel interested in dumping a product knows only too well how soft their skills are. It is unfortunate that the banner of soft skills does not carry any message of personal and social development. It would be pertinent to recall here that education in its true sense is a process of socialisation. The dominance of business models in the field of education prevents the "man making" education from occupying the foreground.

The fact that to go up in the international "ease of doing business index" a country has to score well in the category of "honesty" is an unambiguous indicator of the ill effects of a purely career-centric education. The sole aim of preparing students for corporate culture has relegated that part of education which gives us caring, empathetic and humane fellow beings

to an intellectual hinterland. The reality of the above statement can be witnessed in soft skills training programmes where importance is given only to professional skills like time management, task orientation, leadership, team building, rote work ethics, observance of rules, respecting the boss with the focus always and only on the growth and development of the organisation/institution with least regard to quality of character and ethical sensibility.

Programmes are extremely rare that train people to care for others. In the Indian context early on there were claims of a helping colleague being observed by the management and rewarded for that altruistic behaviour. But such stories have not found a place in the word of the mouth communication of the employees in any big way. Is it not cruel irony that a person who is pleasant and humorous at work place is moody or aggressive at home? We cannot but wonder whether one's essential humanity is sacrificed at the altar of corporate success and market economy. It is much worse to see educational institutions opting sometimes and compelled at other times to keep in mind career goals alone not sparing a thought to the mission of preparing the youth to be fine human beings with high character.

The field of soft skills, as it pertains today, suffers from a sense of misdirection. The programmes designed mostly target those that have entered adulthood and ready for the work place. Soft skills sensitisation should start from an early age. There should be emphasis on childhood and early-middle-late adolescence. Introducing one to soft skills at the adult stage would only be a belated correctional exercise. Learning them at this stage also runs the risk of prompting individuals to employ the skills learnt as strategies for manipulation. A majority of adults think that they know the world and themselves already and do not allow capacities for genuine demonstration of soft skills become permanent features of their personalities. It must not be forgotten that personal and social identities start at home.

The environment of one's home decides his/her personality to a great extent apart from a few exceptions. It is at home that the world is introduced to the child for the first time. But a vast number of homes seem to fail today and the factors of quarrelsome parents, drunkard father, careless parents, and parents without morals and absence of peace and harmony impact the development of the child for the worse. Children of working parents are deprived of crucial attention at the same time having no recourse to affection, care and emotional guidance of grandparents thanks to the arrival of nuclear families that are here to stay.

Adolescents coming out of such homes into the world naturally find it hard to cope with the demands of the real world where they have to negotiate encounters and situations involving people of diverse socio-cultural backgrounds. In fact, the parents of such homes suffer a lack of soft skills. This is a situation least enviable and hardly manageable by some academic measures. It would not be an exaggeration to state that the absence of soft skills is owing to the failure of family and educational institutions. Neither the home nor the school in isolation can provide the complex environment of the actual world where a person comes across all sort of challenges every day but together they can teach values, importance of good relationships, fine manners and healthy life styles thus preparing them to face the game called life. It is here that soft skills find their moorings and relevance.

On the other hand language skills alone are not sufficient to manage one's feelings, thoughts, ideas, behaviours, motifs, attitudes, goals, problem solving, conflict, decision making and relationships. The situation is recognised now and there are attempts to use literature to induce and sustain certain essential human qualities for a fuller comprehension of one's self and life situations. The skills needed to achieve this can be grouped under one umbrella term–soft skills.

The importance of soft skills is widely felt particularly in recruitment and in the corporate world. Numerous soft skills training institutions and trainers have sprouted with significant visibility. It is also a known fact that many attend these training programmes by

spending a lot of money and time. But it is a mistake to assume that soft skills can be taught and people trained in them through short duration, module based courses. Any careful examination and review of the so called crash courses would show that such crash courses invariably crashed.

Soft Skills Development and English Literature:

Soft Skills are behavioural competencies. Also known as interpersonal skills, or people skills, they include proficiencies such as communication skills, conflict resolution and negotiation, personal effectiveness, creative problem solving, strategic thinking, team building, influencing skills and selling skills to name a few. (Singh 2).

These are not skills just learnt in classrooms but competencies consequent accretion of emotional and intellectual capacities over a period of time through one's experiences in life on which sufficient reflection and introspection was done. These skills have become what they are not by just academic learning but by making one's character, personality and consciousness substrates for them to evolve. The dimensions of soft skills explored in recent studies are based on educational and corporate needs rather than the need for an individual to be a peaceful and harmonious being in the society to which he belongs. The corporate need is ultimately oriented towards profit and so, qualities that mark a fine human being tend to be looked at as performing assets. However much one may talk about fusing individual and as organisational goals, individuality takes the back seat here. The humanistic, existential aspect is neglected.

As the skills are always connected with psychological processes in the form of cognition and behaviour. It has already been seen that psychological theories of human personality abound. These theories are mostly indebted to literature for their defence and proofs by way of reference to characters and situations recorded in classical literature, especially the epics and plays. Beginning from Freud up to recent developments like emotional intelligence, psychologists have had to depend upon literature for parallels and illustrations. To demonstrate a trait it makes good sense to refer to a famous character in a classic, the best examples being the ones in Shakespeare. It cannot be denied that literature records human life almost in its entirety – a human being in relationship with himself, the society and the world.

Literary works can train a person in verbalising his / her experience and interactions and also make sense of them. It might not be thought worldly wise to dwell in the literary domain but to learn to deal with one's self there is no other site as rewarding as literature. Concepts like empathy and altruism may not rule the roost in Mammon's world but they are absolutely necessary to hold together a world conducive to economic, political, social and interpersonal games. It is interesting to note that evolutionary biologists treat these as evolutionary necessities in the long run. Literature can enhance one's sense of recognition and familiarity with life. "The greatest pleasure and satisfaction to be found in literature occurs where (as it so often does) it brings us back to the realities of situations, problems, feelings, and relationships".

The Development of Selected Soft Skills through English Literature

Literature is the criticism of life which ultimately empowers an individual, guides the society and leads to the development of an individual as Plato and Aristotle believes. An individual by the study of literature can learns and touch the different aspects of life which helps them to experience the artistic beauty of literature by going in depth study.

In the present study, the selected soft skills are: Personality Development Skills, Communication Skills, Emotional Intelligence Skills, Leadership Development, and Stress Management Skills and the chosen works from different genres of English literature are: short story (*The Beggar* by Anton Chekhov), novel (*Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen), non-fiction prose (*My Financial Career* by Stephen Leacock), poem (*The Road Not Taken* by Robert Frost) and the play (*Final Solution* by Mahesh Dattani) .

Hence by touching the different genres for the development of soft skills is the focus of this research, in brief the chosen skills are

- **Personality Development Skills - Anton Chekhov's *The Beggar***

Personality Development is described as the process of improving and grooming one's outer and inner self in order to make a positive difference in one's life. The chosen story *The Beggar* by Anton Chekhov describes the transformation of an alcoholic who becomes a better person, in this story an advocate Sergei transform the beggar into his best possible version.

- **Communication Skills – Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice***

Communication Skills are the abilities to convey or share ideas and feelings effectively, these skills enable individuals to understand others and to be understood themselves. In the novel *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen, the female characters Jane and Elizabeth shows the simple but effective communication skills which ultimately make them successful in their lives.

- **Emotional Intelligence Skills – Stephen Leacock's *My Financial Career***

Emotional intelligence (emotional quotient or EQ) is the ability to understand, use, and manage your own emotions in positive ways to relieve stress, communicate effectively, empathize with others, overcome challenges and defuse conflict. The selected story *My Financial Career* by Stephen Leacock talks about a man who made a mess of a simple bank transaction due to less or no management of the Emotional intelligence.

- **Leadership Development – Robert Frost's *The Road Not Taken***

Leadership development is a set of activities that prepare current and future leaders to perform effectively in their roles. Leadership development enables employees to improve their skills in areas such as: Decision making. Project management. The poem *The Road Not Taken* by Frost helps to teach spiritual, ethical, and social principles which essentially requires in a leader.

- **Stress Management Skills – Mahesh Dattani's *The Final Solution***

Stress is an automatic physical, mental and emotional response to a challenging event. It is a normal part of everyone's life. Stress management offers a range of strategies to help you better deal with stress and difficulty (adversity) in your life. The play *Final Solution* by Mahesh Dattani presents various incidences of stressful situations.

The Research Problem:-

In English Education less attention has paid on soft skills development at initial levels and different levels of institutions which has made the students less competitive, And the soft skills and communication skills have been taught as vocation and optional subject after completion of higher education, different preferences and scattered unity in modules at different stages of education at intermediate, collages and university level for soft skill development programme.

Research Methodology:-

The methodology to be adopted for the research is descriptive, analytical and critical with the help of the various print and electronic primary and secondary sources.

Hypothesis:-

The researcher hypothesizes:

1) Literature Study is the effective way to develop and inculcate soft skills.
2) Developing soft skills by open study in English literature can lead to greater enhancement of personality development and other skills including reading habit formation, creativity and cognitive development.
3) Providing skills after schooling can engage learners in different career supportive activities which further lead stress less ness and decreases in mental pressure due to educational issues.
4) Introduction of soft skills at initial level of education can lead to easy access to employment opportunities and self-reliance.
5) Institutional achievement and productivity can increase.

Objectives and Aims of the Study :-

The objectives and aims of this research are:

- ❖ Advancement and upgradation of humans by soft skills development
- ❖ Understanding of possible issue and hurdles in the development of soft skills
- ❖ Developing different tactics and easiest approaches to inculcate soft skills
- ❖ Developing core observation based soft skill development draft/plan/strategy

Limitations of the Study :

The limitations of this study are:

- ❖ This study is specific to the chosen literary works of the authors only. The study includes short story (The Beggar by Anton Chekhov), novel (Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen), non-fiction prose (My Financial Career by Stephen Leacock), the poem (The Road Not Taken by Robert Frost) and the play (Final Solution by Mahesh Dattani).

Importance or Significance of the Study:

The importance or significance of the Study is:

- ✓ Because of less and segregated attention paid on soft skills development at different levels of education led to challenges for competency and less secure career development opportunities, hence this research provide the study and effective development soft skills through English literature.
- ✓ This research study try to observe and understand the core issues and presents relevant soft skills through literature study.
- ✓ The study helps the educational institutions and the government to form Education policies related to skills development and can be used to deal with such matters in the current situation.

i) International Status:

The relevance of this research at International level is as follows:

- ✓ The study can be used by different institutes across the globe to form relevant skill development strategy at educational and business institutions.
- ✓ The output of the study can be used by the institutes to develop and inculcate student centric skills.
- ✓ The study of different literary works and authors can develop the sense oneness and empathy.
- ✓ This study can be used by different groups and organizations to understand the common issues related to soft skills and their solutions to enhance skill competency.
- ✓ The research is relevant in present scenario where the world is becoming global village, drastic increase of business organisation demanding skilled human resources.

ii) National Status :

The importance of this research at national level is:

- ✓ The research presents a unique and effective approach for skills development.
- ✓ This research helps the educational institutes to form better policies and courses for skill development.
- ✓ The study helps the government to pay special attention on the development of skills in educational policies under the separate heads.
- ✓ This research contributes in better human resource development in future by providing the skills at initial stage.

- ✓ This research's due importance can nurture 'skill culture' and can give better output of provided inputs.
- ✓ The study helps in inculcation of diverse literary genres and examples in skills development courses and programs.

iii) Regional Status :

The significance of this research at regional level is:

- ✓ The study helps in understanding and managing the skills development programs.
- ✓ The research helps the institutions and education policy makers to focus on various ways of skills development.
- ✓ This study can help in understanding of soft skills to cater the needs of students at regional level.

iv) Scope of the Study:

The scope of this research is:

- ✓ The research try to observe and understand the importance of soft skills development and presents the relevant soft skills by studying different genres of English literature and also help the institutes as well as the government in developing education policy related to skills development and can be used to deal with such matters in the current situation.

Tentative Chapter Scheme:

Chapter I: Introduction

1.1 Soft Skills : An Overview

1.2 Origin and Development

1.3 Soft Skills : Additional Skills

1.4 Classification and Types of Soft Skills

1.5 Soft Skills and Literature : Relation and Significance

1.6 Contemporary Significance

Chapter II: Development of Personality Development Skills

2.1 Introduction

2.2 Origin and Development

2.3 Understanding Personality Development Skills through the story *The Beggar*

2.4 Insights and Outcomes

Chapter III: Development of Communication Skills -

3.1 Introduction

3.2 Origin and Development

3.3 Understanding Communication Skills through the novel *Pride and Prejudice*

3.4 Insights and Outcomes

Chapter IV: Development of Emotional Intelligence Skills

4.1 Introduction

4.2 Origin and Development

4.3 Understanding Emotional Intelligence Skills through the story *My Financial Career*

4.4 Insights and Outcomes

Chapter V: Development of Leadership Development Skills

5.1 Introduction

5.2 Origin and Development

5.3 Understanding Leadership Development Skills through *The Road Not Taken*

5.4 Insights and Outcomes

Chapter VI: Development of Stress Management Skills

6.1 Introduction

6.2 Origin and Development

6.3 Understanding Stress Management Skills through *Final Solution*

6.4 Insights and Outcomes

Chapter VII: Conclusion

7.1 Findings

7.2 Recommendations

7.3 Suggestions

The present research work will be an attempt to discuss soft skills through various literary pieces no work of this sort has been taken up at any level hence the raison deter for the present study does exists.

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